

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 IO-14

ACDA-12 AF-10 ARA-14 HA-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /113 W

-----118006 091404Z /72

R 081659Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO USINFO WASHDC

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 0626

UNCLAS DUBLIN 01804

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: EDITORIAL IN THE IRISH TIMES JUNE 8, 1978

FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN THE IRISH TIMES
JUNE 8, 1978 UNDER THE HEADING OF THE MIDDLE GROUND:

PRESIDENT CARTER'S LATEST FOREIGN POLICY SPEECH IS
NOTABLE FOR STYLE RATHER THAN CONTENT. DELIVERED
YESTERDAY, IT HAD BEEN AWAITED WITH INTEREST BECAUSE
OF THE GATHERING STORM OVER EAST-WEST DETENTE, WHICH
HAD MADE ITSELF FELT INSIDE THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION
AS WELL AS INTERNATIONALLY. WOULD THE PRESIDENT FOLLOW
UP THE HARD LINE ENUNCIATED BY HIS UNCOMPROMISING
NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER, DR. BRZEZINSKY, OR WOULD
HE CHOOSE THE MORE CAUTIOUS AND FLEXIBLE APPROACH
OF HIS SECRETARY OF STATE MR. VANCE, AND HIS UN
AMBASSADOR MR. YOUNG? IN THE END, HE COMMITTED HIMSELF
WHOLLY TO NEITHER CAMP: HE CHOSE THE MIDDLE GROUND
AND THE WAY OF COMPROMISE.

IT WAS A WISE DECISION. THIS IS NOT THE TIME FOR
STRIKING DEFINITIVE POSTURES OR UNLEASHING A STREAM
OF CALCULATED VERBAL AGGRESSION. THERE IS NO DOUBT
THAT DETENTE IS UNDER STRAIN, AND THAT MOSCOW AND
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WASHINGTON HAVE GROUNDS FOR SUSPICION OF EACH OTHER'S
MOTIVES AND INTENTIONS. THE SOVIET BUILD-UP OF
CONVENTIONAL FORCES IN EUROPE, THE AFRICAN ADVENTURES
WITH CUBA AS THE CAT'S PAW, AND THE BLAND DISREGARD
OF HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE HELSINKI
AGREEMENT ALL PROVIDE LEGITIMATE CAUSE FOR CONCERN
ON THE AMERICAN SIDE.

THE EXPRESSION OF THAT CONCERN, HOWEVER, HAS SOMETIMES BEEN UNHELPFUL AND BADLY TIMES; AND THE RUSSIANS, FOR THEIR PART, SEEM GENUINELY TO IMAGINE THAT THE UNITED STATES IS WHIPPING UP ITS ANGER TO JUSTIFY DELAYING THE SECOND SALT AGREEMENT ON THE LIMITATION OF STRATEGIC WEAPONS. YESTERDAY, MR. CARTER UNEQUIVOCALLY DENIED THAT THERE WAS ANY CONSPIRACY TO FREEZE THE NEGOTIATIONS, AND WENT SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT THEIR PROSPECTS WERE GOOD.

BUT THE PASSAGES IN HIS ADDRESS WHICH DEFINED THE AMERICAN ATTITUDE TO MOSCOW'S PRESENT BEHAVIOUR WERE EQUALLY UNAMBIGUOUS. "A COMPETITION WITHOUT SHARED RESTRAINT AND WITHOUT SHARED RULES." HE SAID, "WILL ESCALATE INTO GRAVER TENSIONS, AND OUR RELATIONSHIPS AS A WHOLE WILL SUFFER." SOVIET STRENGTHENING OF ITS MILITARY POWER WENT FAR BEYOND THE REQUIREMENTS OF SELF-DEFENCE. DETENTE REMAINED CENTRAL TO AMERICAN POLICY, BUT THE UNITED STATES WAS READY FOR CONFRONTATION IF RUSSIA CHOSE THAT COURSE.

MR. CARTER ALSO MADE THE POINT THAT SOVIET BEHAVIOUR AFFECTED AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT SPELL THIS OUT, HE PROBABLY WAS TRYING TO REMIND MOSCOW THAT THE WHITE HOUSE, UNLIKE THE

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KREMLIN, WAS NOT THE ONLY POWER IN THE LAND: THE THINKING AND DECISIONS OF CONGRESS ALSO HAD TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE MESSAGE WILL GET ACROSS - THAT CONGRESS, FOR EXAMPLE, COULD PREVENT AGREEMENT ON SALT-2, NO MATTER HOW MUCH THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF WANTED IT.

THE SPEECH MAY NOT HAVE SIGNALLED ANY RADICAL CHANGES IN AMERICAN POLICY; BUT IT WAS COUCHED IN DIRECT, UNEMOTIONAL AND UNDERSTANDABLE LANGUAGE. IT WAS CLEAR THAT COMPROMISE WAS NOT, COULD NOT BE, A ONE-SIDED AFFAIR: IT HAD TO BE A BALANCE OF POLICIES, UNDERPINNED BY COOPERATION. IF THAT BALANCE WAS NOT MAINTAINED, CONFLICT WOULD FOLLOW. MR. BREZHNEV WOULD DO WELL TO PAY ATTENTION. KRENE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, SPEECHES, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978DUBLIN01804
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780241-0906
Format: TEL
From: DUBLIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780683/aaaacswk.tel
Line Count: 109
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7035408f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2442524
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EDITORIAL IN THE IRISH TIMES JUNE 8, 1978 FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN THE IRISH TIMES JUNE 8, 1978 UNDER THE HEADING OF THE MIDDLE GROUND
TAGS: SOPN, EI, US, (CARTER, JIMMY)
To: ICA
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7035408f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014